1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

Nuerland lacks the two raw materials that have played so important a part in the manufacture of primitive tools: iron and stone. Nuer have always been poor in iron objects. Till recently they possessed very few iron spears, cherished as heirlooms, but used instead the straightened horns of antelope and buck, ebony wood, and the rib-bones of giraffe, all of which are still used to-day, though almost entirely in dances (Fig. 11). Wooden hoes were used for gardening, and are still sometimes so used to-day. Iron bells (Fig. 4) are rare and highly prized even at the present time, and in the old days iron rings and bracelets were important pieces of property. Wooden bells and ivory and leather rings and bracelets took their place in common use. Nuer have no knowledge of smelting and little of the blacksmith's art. I have never seen a forge and, though there are certainly some blacksmiths, their art is crude and may be regarded as a recent innovation, at any rate in most parts of Nuerland. Spears bought from Arab merchants are beaten out in the cold.

Nuerland also lacks any kind of hard stone. Indeed, outside villages I have never seen a stone. They are sometimes brought from neighbouring areas and employed as hammers, for smoothing metal ornaments, for rubbing skins, and so on. Grinding grain seems to have been a recent introduction. The grinder is made from thornwood and the grindstone from baked marsh mud mixed with finely pounded potsherds (Fig. 12). With clay, mud, and sand, Nuer also make pots, grain-bins, pipes, toys, hearthstones, and firescreens; construct the walls of byres and huts; and coat floors and those parts of homesteads they wish to keep smooth and clean.

Nature, which denies them iron and stone, is niggardly in her gift of wood. Large trees are rare. Thornwood and low brushwood provide timber for building, spear-shafts, harpoon-shafts, clubs (Frontispiece and Plate VIII), pestles, neck-rests, baskets, and winnowing trays. Probably no trees in Nuerland are suitable for carving and Nuer possess no wooden utensils. Even the ebony they use for making spears is not found in their country. Ambatch-trees grow in some parts of the swamp areas and from it is made an object which serves as a parrying stick, tobacco pouch, pillow, and seat (Plate XXIX). Byre and kraal fires are fed with dried dung, and wood fuel is only employed in the kitchen—grasses and millet stalks sometimes being used as a substitute. Grasses, millet stalks, and some plants are also used for various purposes: rafters, windscreens, thatching, cord, basketwork, &c. Gourds are cultivated for dairy utensils.

Lacking iron and stone Nuer thus make use of vegetable and earthy materials instead. Animal products are also a valuable

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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627 people are within easy striking distance of one another. This is one of the main reasons why it is difficult to settle feuds when the parties belong to different primary or secondary tribal sections.

Most disputes occur in villages or camps and between persons of nearby villages, since people who live close to one another have more opportunities for dispute than those who live far from

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FIG. 10. Rubbing-stone grindstone with wooden grinder.

one another. Such quarrels are usually complicated by notions of kinship, affinity, age, and so forth and are very often the result of breaches of specific patterns of social behaviour rather than simple breaches of general social regulations. They are, therefore, generally settled in harmony with these traditional patterns. But, if they are not settled by the mediation of kinsmen, they are likely to lead to violence, because, as we have remarked, Nuer are at once prepared to fight if they are wronged or insulted, unless kinship, or great disparity in age, restrains them. If a man refuses to pay compensation for a wrong, there-

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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putting together their genealogies construct some sort of tree of descent from Mem, in which the agnatic relationship between various lineages could be indicated; but it would be very unlike the spontaneous statements that at once delineate the lineage system of large clans like the JIKACA, associated with tribal territories.

FIG. 13. Leather fan.

It is also very noticeable that Nuer knowledge of the lineage system of a dominant clan tends to be restricted to those parts of the system that correspond to segments of their tribe. Thus the JIKACA lineages which are associated with segments of the Lou tribe are well known to Lou tribesmen, but they have no, or very little, knowledge of the JIKACA lineages of the Rengyan tribe. Likewise I experienced much difficulty in obtaining from Gaajak and Gaajak tribesmen a clear account of the lineages of the GAATGAWEER clan which form the dominant nucleus of the Gaagwang tribe, though they were well informed about the lineages of the same clan which are associated with segments of their own tribes.

It follows from our account that, as we have suggested before, the lineage system of a clan can only to a very limited extent be considered a true record of descent. Not only does its time depth appear to be limited and fixed, but also the distance between collateral lineages appears to be determined by the political distance between the sections with which those lineages are associated, and it may be supposed that a lineage only persists as a distinct line of descent when it is significant politically. Ancestors above the founder of a minimal lineage are relevant only as points of departure for denoting lines of descent when these lines are rendered significant by the political role of the lineage system. We have suggested that the depth of lineages is a function of the range of counting agnation on an existential plane, and we now further suggest that the range of counting agnation is largely determined by its organizing role in political structure.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
F J22 Nuer F J22

Chapter Three

FAMILY LIFE IN NUERLAND

THE HOUSE AND ITS FURNISHINGS

THE Nuer does not live to himself. He is a part of his particular village, and his actions affect all his relatives, no matter how distant the relationship may be. This fact checks him to some extent in his misdeeds, for any infringement of Nuer law not only affects him but all his people as well. He must give heed to them and to Nuer law in general if he is to count on their support and aid in time of need (Fig. 1).

The men and boys of the village usually sleep in the barn which is to be found in most villages. A house is set aside for the sleeping quarters of the girls. The women and little children sleep in the houses.

The Nuer house is conical in shape. It has mud walls up to about three feet or more from the ground, then the sloping grass roof. There are no windows. A door, woven like a mat, is made of grass. If the weather is cool, a fire is made inside the house and the smoke goes out through the roof. At night the door is tightly closed in order to keep wild animals out, so the ventilation is indeed poor.

A fence of cane-stalks is made and encloses a small yard. The door of this fence as well as the door of the house are made low so that one must stoop in order to get in.

The yard is swept clean—a bunch of grass tightly tied together at one end suffices for a broom. One part of the enclosure is plastered with mud for a radius of two or three feet, and in the centre is a hole, also plastered, in which the women may be found pounding the dura, making use of a long pole. The dura is pounded very fine, the coarser parts being sifted out by shaking it on a grass

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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the word *dil* has generally the sense of 'pure', 'true', 'perfect', or 'aristocratic'. It is the ox of perfection. It is the young man's friend and companion. He plays with it and fondles it. He composes poems about it and sings them to it, and he gets a small boy to lead it round the camp in the morning or evening as he leaps behind it chanting poems. He walks among the cattle at night ringing a cattle-bell and singing of his kin, his lovers, and his cattle, and he praises this ox among all other oxen. He makes tassels to hang from one of its horns, and he loves to see it toss the tassel in the air with a sweep of the neck. He acquires an iron bell to hang round its neck, and no music, unless it be the ox's lowing, is sweeter to his ears than its tinkling in the pastures. He goes to the edge of the camp to meet it when it returns from grazing in the evening. He is never tired of describing its points, and as he does so, and also in dancing, he may hold up his arms in imitation of its horns. Should the ox die he is downcast; and should he die it must be sacrificed at his mortuary ceremony.

The youth now also enters through this ox into a new kind of relationship with God, the guardian spirits of his family and lineage, and the ghosts of his ancestors. When he has tethered it in the kraal for the night he may pet it, removing ticks from its belly and scrotum and picking out adherent dung from its anus; and he may at the same time rub ashes on its back. Ordinarily I think he does this simply because the ox, which has suffered from parasites throughout the day, gets relief from its back being rubbed, but I was told that he may occasionally as he does so speak a few words to God or to the ghosts. While it is not until a man marries and has children and an independent household that he sacrifices

FIG. 5
Hollowed-out ash-bench log, used as stool, &c.

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